

# LEVI STRAUSS FOUNDATION

## Creating an online support network for HIV-positive gay men in Asia

**Organization:** Fridae Limited  
**Website:** <http://www.fridae.com/>  
<http://www.positivevoices.net/>  
**Grant amount:** \$100,000

Fridae.com has been a strong advocate for the LGBT communities in Asia since 2001. In addition to providing a popular social networking platform for Asian men who have sex with men (MSM), Fridae.com is widely respected as an objective source of information.

The number of HIV-positive MSM is on the rise across the Asia-Pacific region, and the response from public health authorities, even in the wealthier countries, has been inadequate. Living with HIV in Asia poses significant cultural hurdles. Many HIV+ MSM hide their status from their family, friends and loved ones for fear of stigma and discrimination. Isolation and depression lead to substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, and poor personal healthcare practices.

In response, Fridae.com has launched PositiveVoices.Net (PVN), a one-stop online resource that leverages the efficiency, anonymity and relative safety of the Internet to allow users to share their experiences about living with HIV/AIDS. The focus of the site will be on user-generated content, exchanging stories and peer support. While PVN will provide links to medical information and real-time care and support services, its mission is to bring the “soft,” emotional issues associated with living with HIV/AIDS to the fore, to improve self-esteem among HIV+ MSM and empower them to make informed, healthy decisions.

In light of Asia’s diversity, the site will be available in multiple languages, including English, Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese. A panel of experts and mentors will help shape editorial direction, contribute ideas and assist with moderating the discussion.

Beyond its immediate value as a virtual community and clearinghouse for information, LSF believes that over the long term PVN has the potential to become a platform for discussing HIV policies, a nexus for HIV advocates and a catalyst for social change.

***“PositiveVoices.Net represents an exciting, pioneering strategy for combating HIV disease in Asia. Though the premise is simple, PVN tackles many of the thorny obstacles that hobble real-world HIV efforts.”***

**– Stanley Wong, Manager, Asia Pacific and Africa, Levi Strauss Foundation**